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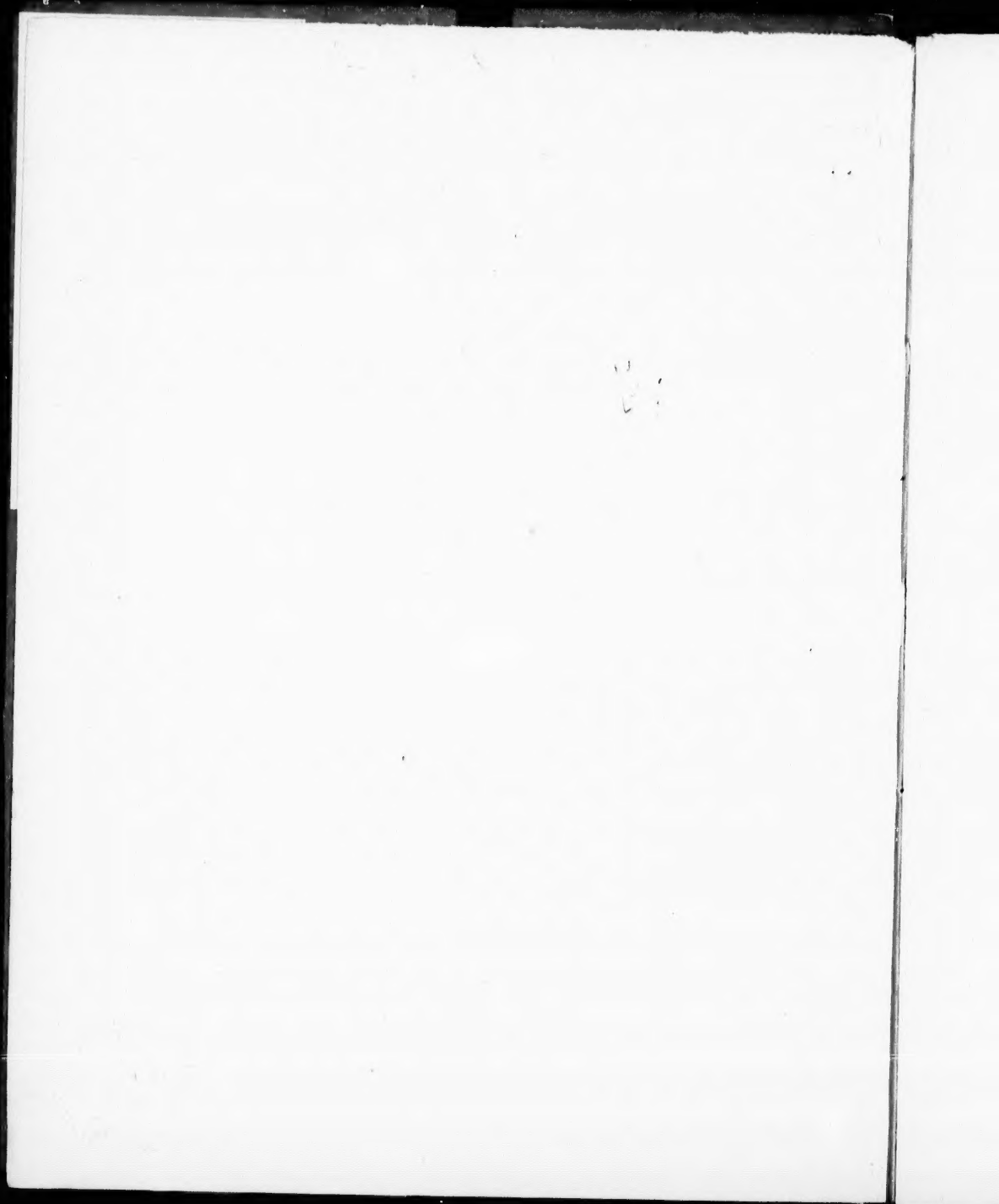
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Forme 1580-1-20

Mr. P. Gagnon
with Compliments
Horace T. Martin

A Christmas Coterie.

XMAS 1890.



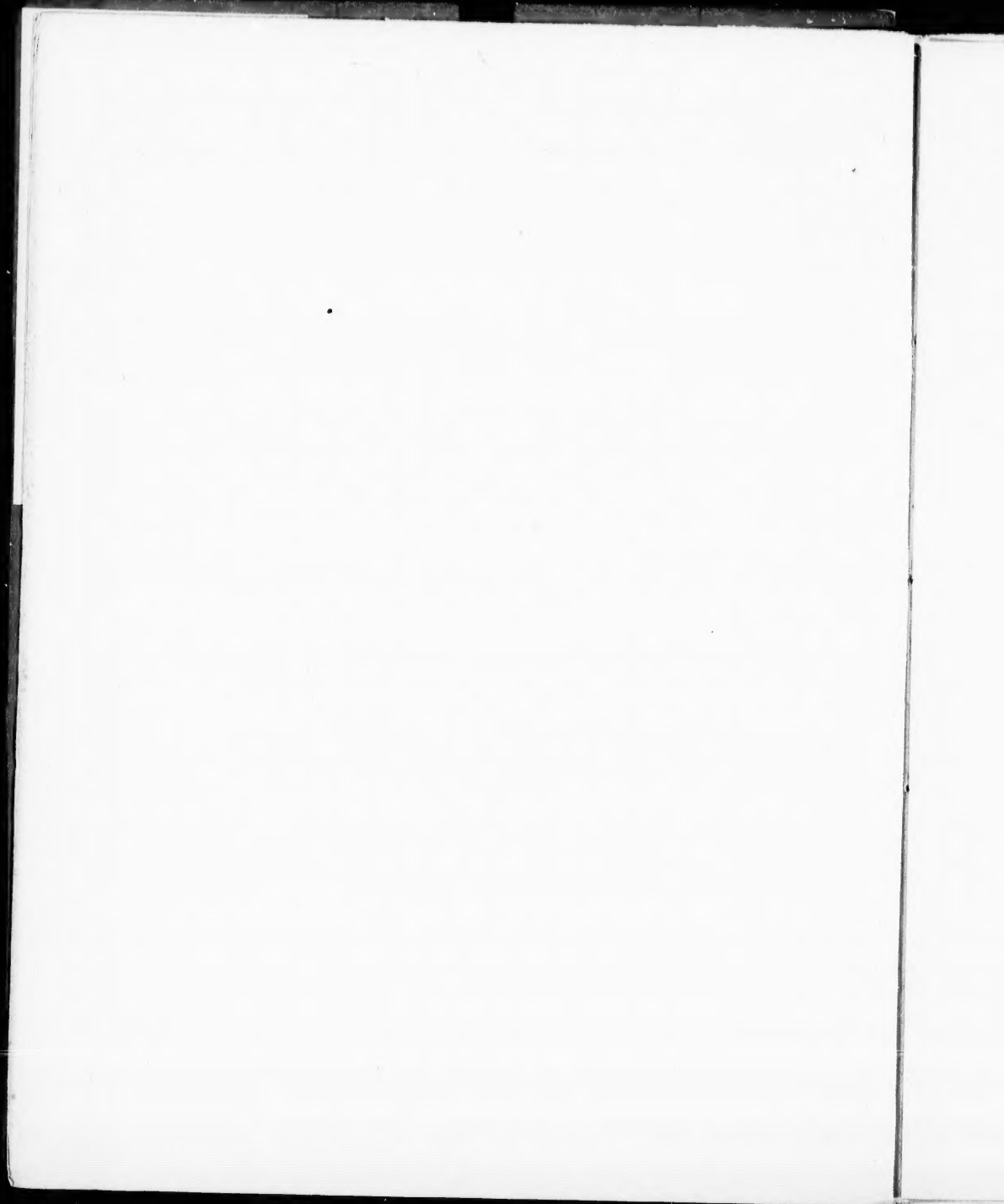
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ON Christmas Eve I sat alone musing. A magic word possessed my thoughts and soon transported me to dreamland, therein to meet a little band of happy children—my first playmates—merry as of yore.

Then entered my latter found friends to join the company ; and the full chorus of those familiar voices was, to me, gleeful as a

Christmas Carol.



"In the presence of friends, we think aloud" says Emerson. And surely if ever a man felt the presence of friends it would be at the Yule-tide when on the quiet Sabbatic air of a Christmas Eve comes to him thoughts of happy days, of long ago.

That mankind finds a Paradise in the earlier dawn of his childhood may be grounds for supposing that the individual has to look to his childhood for a paradise: with many, of course, this is not so, but it must be true of the majority, else why should we so persistently refer to the 'good old times.'

It has been said the loss of Santa Claus is the loss of childhood, and certainly the rapturous glee of the little ones as they dance by day and dream by night in expectancy of the Chimney visitant, is enough to convince us that no happiness more pure awaits maturing years.

Thrice blest are we, who, on the mention of a mystic name, find ourselves ushered silently into the inner chamber of memory to meet there our early playmates, to see again those fresh young faces and once more to laugh over our boisterous sports. It is of these good old times of individual experience I would like to tell; a story very dear to many hearts now far scattered; but then of a charmed brotherhood, led by nature and by nature fed with buoyant spirits, so that life was one prolonged festival, joyous, merry and restless as the babbling brooks of summer or the fairy snowflake circling in the wintry storm. The stickleback darting from its quiet retreat frightened by our net; the minnow nibbling at the bait so treacherously covering the bended pin; the meadow lark, the bobolink, the swallow, these were our toys. Did not the branches of the lofty **sweeping** elms shape themselves to form our cosy nests, and the passing winds tune the tender twigs, a grand æolian harp to please us. Or if the winter took these from us, t'was but an exchange; for did we ever tire of moulding his crystals into the rough forms of our childish fancy. How fearlessly would we plunge into the sea of white waves, which gathered round each house and barn and dashed against them till the icy foam half way reached the roof.

Cares passed over us as the scudding clouds ; our joys were unalloyed. Were we not free from all the toil of life, which, in our innocence, we could almost conceive to be shut out by 'Bennets' Toll-bars' that separated us from the busy town.

But what is this word which bears such charms, let us now turn from our reverie and dwell for a moment on its history.

* * * * *

Three centuries and a half have passed since the brave pilot of St. Malo steered westward and after many days of fearless battling with waves, his staunch hope conquers. His little fleet stems the flow of our noble river and for the first time the ears of whitemen hear the music of this word. 'This is the mighty waters of the "HOCHELAGAS," this is their proud highway; follow it, 'said the savage,' through the kingdom of the Saguenay, past the lofty Stadacona, then come you to the "*Village of the Beaver Meadows*" So did Cartier, till he stood, transfigured in the midst of this awful people, surrounded by primeval wilds. That all the personelle of this strange act should have disappeared with the death of the discoverer is a weird and pathetic chapter in history.

Years later Maisonneuve comes with his pious company to found the "City of Mary," and through the changes of many generations the first descriptive title of the Algonquin is quite forgotten. The sacred name of Ville Marie has past, the Royal Mount now lends to our fond city a name, and with the ushering in of a fourth century, we catch the echo of these indian

syllables, and how fitting is it that this word should on its resurrection be first applied to the house of God.

In 1828 was erected a small but neat edifice known as "Hochelaga" Chapel, situated near the Cross, opposite St. Mary's Current. Nearly twenty years however elapse before the beauty of the title wins enough admirers to allow its application to the houses which cluster in the neighbourhood, then it flourishes, and "Hochelaga" after its long slumber once more rings glibly from the tongues of men.

But fate followed still, and less than three score years sees the name again consigned to oblivion. Progress, with utter disregard to sentiment, spreads the limits of the City, till, breaking down the barrier of the Toll-gate, it over-runs the fields and meadows, planting its piles and erecting as a monument to all the departed beauty of nature, the tall smoke-capped obelisk that marks the six day shrine of modern man.

The little chapel is demolished, the old land marks fast disappears and thus again does history record the passing away of the 'Beaver-meadow' village.

I am suddenly aroused—the time is fast approaching midnight, and we must hasten.

* * * * *

In the solemn air of the Cathedral, the altar lights are burning brightly, incense softly floats in mimic clouds, the murmuring echoes of the mass gently lead the thought, till, from the lips of trumpets a flood of music bursts upon the ear, and organ-pipe, and reed, and string, swell the rich chords as voices loudly sing the Christmas tidings,

“Gloria in Excelsis.”

